United Nations A/63/220

General Assembly

Distr.: General
5 August 2008

Original: English

Sixty-third session
Item 67 (a) of the provisional agenda*
Promotion and protection of human rights: implementation of human rights instruments

United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report, which is submitted in accordance with General Assembly resolutions 36/151, 61/153 and 62/148, describes the recommendations for grants to beneficiary organizations that were adopted by the Board of Trustees of the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture at its twenty-seventh and twenty-eighth sessions. The report also provides information on policy decisions adopted by the Board in implementation of the recommendations made by the Office of Internal Oversight Services (see E/CN.4/2005/55) with a view to further enhancing the activities of the Fund.

* A/63/150.

08-45070 (E) 220808

Contents

		Paragraphs	Page
I.	Introduction	1–6	3
	A. Submission of the report	1	3
	B. Mandate of the Fund	2	3
	C. Board of Trustees	3–4	3
	D. Admissibility criteria	5–6	4
II.	Financial situation of the Fund	7–10	4
	Contributions and pledges received	7	4
III.	Twenty-eighth session of the Board of Trustees	11–18	7
	A. Recommendations adopted by the Board	12	7
	B. Revised guidelines for the use of organizations	13–14	8
	C. Policy decisions	15–18	8
IV.	Outstanding recommendation of the Office of Internal Oversight Services	19–24	9
	Recommendation 9: strengthened management system	21–24	9
V.	International Day in Support of Victims of Torture	25	10
VI.	How to make a contribution to the Fund	26	11
VII.	Conclusions and recommendations	27–29	12

I. Introduction

A. Submission of the report

1. The present report was prepared in accordance with the arrangements approved by the General Assembly in its resolution 36/151, by which it established the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture. It presents the recommendations adopted by the Board of Trustees of the Fund at its twenty-seventh and twenty-eighth sessions, held in Geneva from 22 to 26 October 2007 and from 6 to 8 February 2008. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights approved these recommendations on behalf of the Secretary-General. The present report complements the report on the activities of the Fund submitted to the Human Rights Council at its seventh session in March 2008 (A/HRC/7/50).

B. Mandate of the Fund

2. The Fund receives voluntary contributions from Governments, non-governmental organizations and individuals. In accordance with the practice established by its Board of Trustees in 1982, the Fund provides grants to non-governmental organizations that submit projects involving medical, psychological, social, financial, legal and humanitarian or other forms of assistance to torture victims and their relatives.

C. Board of Trustees

3. The Secretary-General administers the Fund through the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights with the advice of a Board of Trustees composed of five members acting in their personal capacity and appointed by the Secretary-General with due regard to equitable geographical distribution and in consultation with their Governments. In August 2005, the Secretary-General appointed the following members for a period of three years, renewable once: Krassimir Kanev (Bulgaria), Sonia Picado (Costa Rica), Savitri Goonesekere (Sri Lanka), Joseph Oloka-Onyango (Uganda) and Derrick Pounder (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland). On 27 March 2008, Ms. Picado resigned as member and Chairperson of the Board of Trustees.

4. The Board held its twenty-seventh session in Geneva from 22 to 26 October 2007 to examine applications for funding and make recommendations on grants to be allotted to beneficiary organizations for the period from January to December 2008.[1] In addition, at its twenty-eighth session, held from 6 to 8 February 2008, the Board mainly discussed policy issues, thus following up on recommendation 7 (a) of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS),[2] in which the Office called on the Board to put policy issues at the top of its agenda, especially policies regarding

[1] See A/HRC/7/50.

[2] See E/CN.4/2005/55, para. 76.

priority setting and impact assessment. At its twenty-eighth session, the Board also awarded grants for projects from priority regions, which had been left pending a decision at its twenty-seventh session owing to the insufficient information available at that time.

D. Admissibility criteria

5. Project admissibility criteria, outlined in the Fund's guidelines, require that a project be presented by a non-governmental organization. The beneficiaries must be direct victims of torture and/or direct family members. Priority is given to projects providing direct assistance to torture victims. This could consist of medical or psychological assistance; help with social or financial reintegration through vocational training for victims; or legal assistance to seek redress for victims or members of their families or to process asylum-seekers claims. Depending on available funding, the Fund may finance projects to organize training programmes, seminars or conferences to allow health-care professionals or other service providers to exchange best practices. Grant requests for projects involving investigation, research, studies, publications or similar activities are not, however, admissible.

6. The Fund can provide emergency assistance to individuals in countries where no project is receiving support. This type of request is examined according to a specific procedure outlined in the guidelines. Detailed information on the various types of assistance provided through the projects financed by the Fund, as well as their impact on beneficiaries, can be found in the report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session (A/58/284, paras. 27-34).

II. Financial situation of the Fund

Contributions and pledges received

7. Since the last report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly on the activities of the Fund (A/62/189), contributions and pledges were received as per the table below. They will enable the Board to make recommendations for grants at its twenty-ninth session, to be held from 13 to 17 October 2008. Grants recommended at the next session of the Board will be disbursed in January 2009 for the year from 1 January to 31 December 2009.

Table 1
Contributions and pledges received from 3 October 2007 to 30 June 2008

Donors	*Amount (in United States dollars)*	*Date of receipt*
States		
Algeria	5 000	10 January 2008
Bulgaria	2 000	11 December 2007
Canada	60 036	2 January 2008
Czech Republic	17 042	14 December 2007
Denmark	417 536	19 May 2008

Donors	*Amount (in United States dollars)*	*Date of receipt*
Hungary	7 204	27 November 2007
Kuwait	10 000	2 November 2007
Netherlands	1 119 970	24 December 2007
The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	2 000	7 January 2008
Switzerland	85 170	9 October 2007
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	5 000	4 December 2007
Individuals		
Maran, Rita	50	4 December 2007
Thomas and Ingeruth Frankl	360	23 November 2007
Total contributions	**1 731 668**	
Pledges		
States		
Belgium	147 492	28 December 2007
France	315 457	14 April 2008
Ireland	378 214	3 March 2008
Liechtenstein	24 084	13 June 2008
Luxembourg	29 154	10 January 2008
Norway	194 552	5 May 2008
Saudi Arabia	25 000	6 February 2008
Serbia	2 500	1 January 2008
Total pledges	**1 116 543**	

8. As of 2007, there has no longer been a specific call for proposals for priority regions, although applications from those regions received during the standard call for proposals (January-April) that are not ready to be considered during the regular grant allocation session in October every year are considered at the February session in the following year.

Table 2
Grants awarded between 2004 and 2008, by region
(In United States dollars)

	2004	*Percentage*	*2005*	*Percentage*	*2006*	*Percentage*	*2007*	*Percentage*	*2008*	*Percentage*
Africa	456 000	6.98	295 500	5.42	407 500	7.03	640 000	10.37	1 205 000	14.04
Asia	538 000	8.24	497 500	9.12	465 400	8.03	556 000	9.01	853 500	9.94
Eastern Europe	560 500	8.58	474 000	8.69	606 500	10.46	771 000	12.49	1 215 000	14.16
Latin American and Caribbean States	838 000	12.83	699 000	12.81	762 500	13.15	665 000	10.77	992 500	11.56
Western European and other States	4 140 000	63.38	3 489 500	63.96	3 557 000	61.34	3 541 500	57.37	4 316 700	50.30
Total allocated by the Board	**6 532 500**		**5 455 500**		**5 798 900**		**6 173 500**		**8 582 700**	
Total amount paid to organizations	**6 220 500**		**4 835 000**		**5 793 900**		**6 133 910**		[a]	

[a] The final amount paid in 2008 is not yet available as some grants recommended at the twenty-eighth session of the Board, in February 2008, are still pending since some pre-screening visits are still in progress.

9. The level of funding allotted increased by 31 per cent between 2004 and 2008, as shown in table 3. It should be noted, however, that during the period from 2005 to 2007, the Fund implemented recommendation 10 of OIOS[2] and changed the funding cycle in order to allocate grants for a future period rather than for one that had already passed. During this three-year period, grants were allocated for 18 months rather than for 12 months, which has had an impact on the total level of funding allotted each year.

Table 3
Level of funding allotted compared to 2004
(In United States dollars)

Year	*Total allocated*	*Difference compared to 2004 (Percentage)*
2004	6 532 500	
2005	6 455 500	-16.5
2006	5 798 900	-11.2
2007	6 173 500	-5.5
2008	8 582 700	+31

Table 4
Level of grants paid compared to 2004
(In United States dollars)

Year	*Total paid*	*Difference compared to 2004 (Percentage)*
2004	6 220 500	
2005	4 835 000	-22.3
2006	5 793 900	-6.9
2007	6 133 910	-1.39

10. During the reporting period, the Board made an effort to attain a greater geographical balance in grant allocation. Table 5 shows that, between 2004 and 2008, the level of funding to projects in Africa and Eastern Europe increased by 7 per cent and by 5.5 per cent, respectively, whereas the level of support to projects in the Western European and other States during the same period decreased by 13 per cent.

Table 5
Grant allocation in 2004 and 2008, percentage by region

Region	*2004*	*2008*	*Difference*
Africa	6.98	14.04	+7.06
Asia	8.24	9.94	+1.7
Eastern Europe	8.58	14.16	+5.58
GRULAC	12.83	11.56	-1.27
WEOG	63.38	50.30	-13.08

III. Twenty-eighth session of the Board of Trustees

11. The twenty-eighth session of the Board was dedicated to the discussion of policy issues, including the issuance of the revised guidelines for the use of organizations during 2008. A number of grants were also awarded to projects located in priority regions.

A. Recommendations adopted by the Board

12. During the twenty-eighth session, the Board allocated $1,219,100 to 43 projects for priority regions that were examined at the twenty-seventh session but found not to be ready for funding. The Board also recommended that an additional amount of $665,400 be set aside for intersessional grants for 2008.

B. Revised guidelines for the use of organizations

13. The Board issued a revised version of its guidelines to be used by organizations in 2008, including new decisions on admissibility criteria for projects. The Board decided that requests for funding for flyers to disseminate information on the provisions of the Convention against Torture and its Optional Protocol, witn a view to ensuring access to justice for victims of torture, are now admissible. The Board also decided that requests for the upgrading of premises of organizations where direct assistance is provided are admissible and to continue its policy of not providing grants for speakers' fees.

14. The Board further decided that grantees should identify in-kind contributions in order to enable the secretariat to determine its future policy in this regard.

C. Policy decisions

15. Pursuant to OIOS recommendation 6 (b),[2] the Board discussed the issue of multi-year funding. While taking into account the fact that funding of grantees is subject to the availability of funds on a yearly basis, the Board approved the principle of multi-year funding, which would be decided upon in conjunction with certain criteria. The agreed criteria established by the Board are that eligible organizations would be relatively small, with a high degree of dependence on and an established relationship with the Fund. The organizations identified should also be in full compliance with the requirements of the Fund. Multi-year funding could be granted for a rolling period of three years, although the organizations would have to submit reports and applications on a yearly basis.

16. The Board endorsed a proposal from the Secretariat containing suggestions on how to strengthen the capacity of grantees. The Board has requested that the Secretariat provide it with the number of projects requiring capacity-building at its next session in October 2008.

17. The Board has decided to resume its practice of meeting with grantees. It has requested that the Secretariat organize meetings between selected grantees, the Board and donors at its twenty-ninth session. The Board would prefer to meet with grantees based in developed countries supporting projects in developing countries. It has further requested that the Secretariat identify projects in countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States, with a view to organizing a networking meeting with the Board during its thirtieth session, in February 2009.

18. During the twenty-eighth session, the Board held a meeting with Member States which was attended by 15 delegations, including representatives of the European Commission. The Board provided extensive information on its latest activities, including grants allocated and policy issues adopted, in particular those relating to multi-year funding and capacity-building of grantees, with a view to finalizing the implementation of all outstanding OIOS recommendations. The Board highlighted the fact that while it encouraged unearmarked funding to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), it believed that the trust funds of the Office had specific needs and that donors should continue to earmark their contributions to them.

IV. Outstanding recommendation of the Office of Internal Oversight Services

19. As a result of the work undertaken during the reporting period, OIOS considers that two of its three recommendations (6 (b) (multi-year funding) and 7 (d) (interaction with donors)) have been implemented and that recommendation 9 (strengthened management system) is being implemented.

20. OIOS has commended the considerable enhancements made to the administration of the Fund since its evaluation in 2004,[2] noting that the changes with regard to grant allocations, funding cycles, role and working methods of the Board, internal management, and donor relations will enhance overall efficiency and effectiveness of the Fund, which is crucial if it is to continue to make a positive difference in the lives of victims of torture. The Board considers the process of implementing the recommendations arising from the evaluation to have been both interesting and useful.

Recommendation 9: strengthened management system

21. For the first time, applications for grants for 2009 were received through the online grant system of the Fund. During the period of the call for online applications, the secretariat offered a direct technical assistance service via e-mail to all organizations using the system and replied to multiple queries from potential grantees. The call for applications was extended beyond the established deadline of 1 April 2008 in order to allow organizations facing technical difficulties to submit online. In the end, on an exceptional basis, owing to extreme technical difficulties, a limited number of organizations were allowed to submit their applications for 2009 on paper.

22. During the reporting period, the Secretariat continued working on the further development of the internal administration module of the grant management system of the Fund. Between November 2007 and June 2008, historical data on all grants ever allocated by the Board and details on all organizations that have submitted requests for funding since its first session in 1983 were entered into an internal administration module.

23. It is expected that the development of the external application module for grantees will be completed by the end of 2008 with the addition of features such as the revision of proposed budgets and the acknowledgement of the receipt of grants. The reporting module will be closely linked to the existing application and will be developed during 2009 so that it may be ready for grantees to report on the use of 2009 grants by April 2010.

24. OIOS considers the implementation of the above recommendation to be in progress, and has urged OHCHR to finalize completion of the management system in order to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the operations of the Fund.

V. International Day in Support of Victims of Torture

25. On 26 June 2008, OHCHR, the Committee against Torture, the Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture, the Special Rapporteur of the Human Rights Council on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, the Special Rapporteur of the Human Rights Council on violence against women, its cause and consequences and the Board of Trustees of the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture made the following joint statement to commemorate the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture:

> The year 2008 marks the sixtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the foundation of international human rights law, article 5 of which states that "No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment". Successive human rights treaties have built on this provision. However, despite the comprehensive legal framework to confront torture, six decades after the Universal Declaration much remains to be done to ensure that everybody is free of this scourge.
>
> The adoption of the Universal Declaration sent a clear and unequivocal message — that dignity and justice were for all, including of course for women. Sixty years on, we call upon States to reaffirm their resolve to ensure that the torture protection framework is applied in a gender-sensitive manner, to help to end violence against women; to ensure that mechanisms and targeted efforts are put in place to prevent, investigate and punish acts of violence against women; and to provide full access to justice and effective remedies, including health services and rehabilitation for the harm they have suffered.
>
> Women fall victim to torture in different ways, as highlighted by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's global campaign to end violence against women, launched in February 2008, and by other recent initiatives concerning violence against women, such as the United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict initiative. Certain forms of gender-specific violence perpetrated by State actors, as well as by private individuals or organizations, clearly amount to torture, and it is now recognized that gender-specific violence falls within the definition of torture in the Convention against Torture. The global campaign to end violence against women, when viewed through the prism of the international legal framework prohibiting torture, can be strengthened: there needs to be a broader scope of prevention, protection, justice and reparation for victims, including access to international assistance, than currently exists.
>
> Women deprived of their liberty are particularly vulnerable to sexual violence, which often carries with it a strong stigma exacerbating the suffering stemming from the violent acts. Female detainees also have a number of special needs and face specific challenges that must be taken into account in all protection and prevention efforts.
>
> Persons with disabilities often find themselves excluded from the protection afforded under international instruments. Therefore, the entry into force, on 3 May 2008, of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol is particularly welcome. The Convention not only reaffirms the right of all to be free from torture, cruel, inhuman,

degrading treatment or punishment, but requires States parties to take all effective legislative, administrative, judicial or other measures to prevent persons with disabilities from being subjected to these repellent practices.

On this International Day in Support of Victims of Torture, we again pay tribute to all Governments, civil society organizations, national human rights institutions and individuals engaged in activities aimed at preventing torture, punishing those responsible for it and ensuring that all victims obtain redress and have an enforceable right to fair and adequate compensation, including the means for as full a rehabilitation as possible. We express our gratitude to all donors to the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture. We call on all States, in particular those which have been found to be responsible for widespread or systematic practices of torture, to contribute to the Voluntary Fund as part of a universal commitment for the rehabilitation of torture victims.

Finally, we urge all Member States to join the 35 States that have so far ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and to engage with the Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture.

VI. How to make a contribution to the Fund

26. Contributions to the Fund should always be marked as follows: "payee: United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture, account CH". Payments may be made either by bank transfer: (a) in United States dollars to "United Nations Geneva General Fund", account No. 485001802, J.P. Morgan Chase Bank, International Agencies Banking, 1166 Avenue of the Americas, 17th floor, New York, NY 10036-2708, United States of America (Swift code: CHAS US 33; ABA code: 021000021); (b) in euros to "United Nations Office at Geneva", account No. 23961901, J.P. Morgan Chase Bank, 125 London Wall, London EC2Y 5AJ, United Kingdom (Swift code: CHAS GB 2L, Sorting code: 60-92-42, IBAN: GB25 CHAS 6092 4223 9619 01); (c) in pounds sterling to "United Nations Office at Geneva", account No. 23961903, J.P. Morgan Chase Bank, 125 London Wall, London EC2Y 5AJ, United Kingdom (Swift code: CHAS GB 2L, Sorting code: 60-92-42, IBAN: GB25 CHAS 6092 4223 9619 03); (d) in Swiss francs to "United Nations Geneva General Fund", account No. 240-C0590160.0, UBS, rue du Rhône 8, Geneva 2, Switzerland (Swift code: UBSW CH ZH 12A; IBAN: CH65 0024 0240 CO59 0160 0); (e) in any other currency to "United Nations Geneva General Fund", account No. 240-C0590160.1, UBS, rue du Rhône 8, Geneva 2, Switzerland (Swift code: UBSW CH ZH 12A; IBAN: CH65 0024 0240 CO59 0160 1); (f) or by cheque payable to "United Nations" addressed to: Trésorerie, Nations Unies, Palais des Nations, CH 1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland. Donors are requested to inform the Secretariat of the Fund and the Resource Mobilization Unit of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights when a payment has been made (a copy of the bank transfer order or of the cheque would be appreciated) to facilitate effective follow-up on the official recording procedure and preparation of the Secretary-General's reports.

VII. Conclusions and recommendations

27. **Pursuant to the appeals by the General Assembly and the Board of Trustees of the Fund, donors are invited to pay their contributions to the Fund before the regular allocation period so as to enable the Board to take them into account at its twenty-ninth session, in October 2008.**

28. **The General Assembly and the Board of Trustees have also urged regular donors to increase their contributions, if possible, in order to provide the Board with the resources required to meet the growing needs of torture victims and the members of their families.**

29. **The Board strongly encourages Governments that have not yet contributed to the Fund to do so for the first time, preferably before September 2008.**